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COLLECTOR'S EDITION



Fall/ Winter 2009

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editor's observations.....



these three to deliver a spectacular issue.

Right off the bat, you will take delight in the high definition images of our first article reporting on our SPPN Annual Meeting: Two years ago the SPPN founded the Pioneer Gold Forum to analyze and promulgate conclusions on a host of controversial pioneer gold coins. The third Forum took place at the annual meeting in Los Angeles. Their latest important studies, images and findings are revealed by **Elliot Wehner and Don Kagin** in our lead article. This forum will continue to analyze other questionable pioneer gold pieces so if anyone has suggestions of other pieces to study just email your editor at Don@Kagins.com. This year's meeting, although not quite as well attended in the recent past produced around 40 participants to hear Wells Fargo Curator and SPPN Pioneer of the Year award recipient, **Dr. Robert Chandler** regale those attending with his intimate knowledge and stories of Black Bart, and other characters and artifacts from Wells Fargo archives. Another one of his wonderful articles appears in this issue of The Brasher which commemorates the 150th year since Emperor Norton came to San Francisco. His story and the most comprehensive listing of all known notes and provenance by Don Kagin are related and listed inside.

In spite of the economic downturn it seems that there is still quite a bit of interest in Pioneer Gold Coins this year. The ANA show in Los Angeles and subsequent shows this summer and fall brought a continual stream of buyers and a couple of sellers to the bourse tables. This edition's *Auction Highlights* list notable items from the most recent auctions.

Our feature article comes from **Doug Nyholm**, who gave us a thorough examination of Mormon gold with amazing detailed images of each of the dies used to mint these coins. Other erstwhile contributors include **Fred Holabird**, **Charlie Black** and **George Hull**.

Members will also notice a new column, called *Coin Crush*, which will feature a coveted piece of Private or Pioneer coinage or associated ephemera in each issue. Please send your images & write ups to lena@kagins.com to be featured in upcoming installments of this new addition.

All in all, this latest issue of the bulletin rounds out to be worthy of a collector's edition title. What do you think?

Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Don".

S•P•P•N•

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S.P.P.N. ANNUAL MEETING REPORT



RESULTS FROM THE AUGUST 2009 SPPN **PIONEER FORUM**

The 2009 Society of Private and Pioneer Numismatists held its annual meeting in Los Angeles August 8th at the American Numismatic Association's World's Fair of Money. Members and non members gathered together to hear Dr. Robert Chandler speak on the topic of banking in California as illustrated by the history of Wells Fargo in a fascinating presentation titled "**Wells Fargo, California's Varied Monies, and Colorful Personalities.** **FOLLOWING** Dr. Chandler's talk, the findings of the 2009 Pioneer Forum were discussed. Here **Don Kagin & Elliot Wehner** present the findings...

In January, 2008, the SPPN enlisted the help of prominent numismatists to deliver a final verdict on the nearly half-century's long controversy surrounding the prooflike and overstruck Clark, Gruber & Company 1861 \$20 gold pieces. The unanimous conclusion of the forum was that these were 20th century fantasies. In August of 2008, The Forum again convened to solve another sixty year old controversy—the prooflike/proof 1853 US Assay Office \$20 Gold coins from the “Franklin Hoard” as well as similar controversial issues. The Franklin Hoard coins were the topic of discussion for the 2008 annual meeting, concluding with a final judgment – that the Franklin hoard 1853 US Assay Office \$20s were transfer die forgeries. For the third Pioneer Forum, the SPPN sought to evaluate so-called patterns, restrikes, and so-called “proofing ingots” also associated with the Franklin Hoard or of similar design. Like last year, the results were presented at the annual meeting of the Society.

“prominent numismatists to deliver a final verdict on the nearly half-century's long controversy”

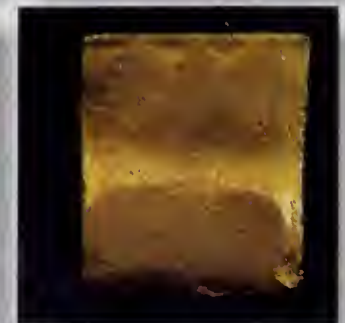


The first coins addressed were those that were the easiest to link to the Assay Office \$20 forgeries discussed in 2008. **Coin #1** is clearly from the same dies as the forgery \$20s, struck on a hand-cut octagonal planchet. This “Franklin Hoard piece” has a similar appearance to the prooflike \$20s, and shows the exact same repeating repressions used to prove those U.S. Assay \$20s forgeries.



Coin #2 is an apparent 1853 1 ounce disk, struck on the same size planchet as a \$20 gold piece. The coin contains the same tablet as on the reverse of the Franklin Hoard U.S. Assay Office \$20s and displays the same repeating depressions. The repeating depressions condemn this piece as a forgery as well.

The next two pieces addressed (**Coin #3 and Coin #4**) were promoted as “Proofing Pieces” by Franklin and Pioneer gold expert John J. Ford as well as by the auction companies in which they appeared. These pieces were suspect years ago, as the existence of “proofing pieces” had never been encountered prior to the 1950's by researchers of Pioneer coinage. The story proffered by John Ford was that these proofing pieces (of high gold content) were used to bring up the fineness of the alloys used at the US Assay Office in San Francisco. While a lack of parting acids, used to remove impurities in the gold alloy, had been nearly a daily problem in Gold Rush era San Francisco, these pieces have no backing in the written historical record, nor have they ever been encountered in other sources. The amount of parting acids needed to create .999 fine gold would have made the production of these pieces impractical (if not impossible), as .900 fine gold for use in coins could be made with much less acid. However the most damning characteristic of these two pieces is the U.S. Assay Office tablet. It displays the repeating depressions that appear on the reverse of previously analyzed forgeries. Combining these facts clearly led the Forum to confidently declare these pieces forgeries.



**Coin #5****Coin #6****Coin #7****Coin #8****Coin #9****Coin #13**

The lead pieces (**Coins #5, #6, #7, #8, #9, #10, and #13**) from the group were the next logical step in the authentication process as they bear similarities to Coin #2, the 1853 "1 ounce disc." Coins #5, #6, & #7 all have hand-punched numbers on both sides that bear a striking resemblance to the punch of the "1" and the "900" on the 1 oz. disc (Coin #2) as well as the "999" on the rectangular "proofing piece" (Coin #4). The digits all appear to be from the same or a similar punch set, indicating they were likely made at the same time, by the same person. Unfortunately, these pieces have been environmentally damaged, covered in lead oxide, making it difficult to determine if any of the repeating representations are visible in the design. Historically, the United States Mint has made few lead trial pieces, as lead is not the ideal metal for this purpose. However, lead is readily available (a member of the panel noted the similarity of the alloy of these pieces to the alloy of toy soldiers) and inexpensive for a forger, making it a likely candidate for testing one's false dies. The most compelling explanation for these pieces (Coins #5, #6, #7, #8, #9, & #13) holds that they are fantasy die trials, i.e. die trials of the Gold \$20 U.S. Assay Office forgeries. While not all of the pieces bear the condemning punches, they all are of a similar appearance, originate from the same hoard, and have similar metallie compositions – thus they are all probably forgeries.

The last lead piece from this group, **Coin #10**, does not appear to be from the Franklin hoard dies, and bears a striking resemblance to the Michelson/Connecticut State Library collection specimens. While clearly predating the Franklin Hoard, the identity of this probable **fantasy** made for collectors is unclear but likely was created by Philadelphia coin dealer Stephen Nagy. Nagy was the son-in-law of dealer J.W. Haseltine who was himself the son-in-law of Philadelphia Mint employee William Idler. Apparently many of the U.S. Assay Office dies were returned to the Philadelphia Mint after the San Francisco Mint was erected in 1854. Those dies remained in their vaults until they were "rediscovered" and employed by Nagy at the Philadelphia Mint around 1908-1912.



One of two copper pieces from the group, the "1853 Copper \$20," **Coin #11** appears to be an intriguing forgery. While the copper alloy is one commonly used for patterns by the US Mint, and it has

the proper number of reeds around the edge (164 reeds) are plausible attributes of a genuine pattern, the unsuccessfully copied design and poor field qualities render considerable doubt about this coin's authenticity. This piece is most likely a transfer die copy **forgery** made by the spark-erosion process. However, Coin #11 cannot be from the Franklin dies as those coins all are struck from a 170 reed collar. Its origin remains unsolved.



The remaining two lead pieces remain from this study group are likely **fantasies**. Upon simple inspection one will notice that the design is poorly executed and weak on **Coin #12**, the lead "900 Thous. 1853 \$20." The odd "1850 \$50" would not even fool the most inexperienced, as the Assay Office was not incorporated until 1851, and the piece has the detail and artistic sophistication of a chocolate foil coin.

"Historically, the United States mint has made few lead trial pieces..."

**Coin #16****Coin #17**

The four remaining pieces (Coin #14, #15, #16, #17) are by far the most interesting of the group. Not a single one can be easily proven neither genuine nor false, and made for much discussion for the Forum.



Coin #15, the uniface reverse, square silver 1852 \$20 is clearly from the same dies as the previous piece and has a known pedigree that begins with Stephen Nagy. The verdict on this piece has not been made either as there is little material evidence to prove it either way. The written record indicates that like the above coin, it is a likely **restrike** from genuine US Mint dies, and not transfer die forgeries.

Coin #14, the uniface reverse, copper 1852 \$20 has many characteristics of a genuine pattern and if dated 1853 would be deemed genuine rather easily. The tablet on the reverse of this piece is of the 1853 style, and is likely from the hub used for the genuine 1853 \$20. Forum participants noted the "52" of the date does not appear to have been placed over a "53" and likely came from a hub that had the last two digits of the date left blank. The dies are of undoubtedly high quality, with mint fresh details and sharpness, and are unlikely to be forgeries.

While it remains unclear when this piece was struck, the Forum agreed it was likely made from real dies at a government facility, either the San Francisco Assay Office in 1852 or more likely at a later date in Philadelphia, possibly by Stephen Nagy. Until further research leads us to a different conclusion, we are designating it a **restrike**.





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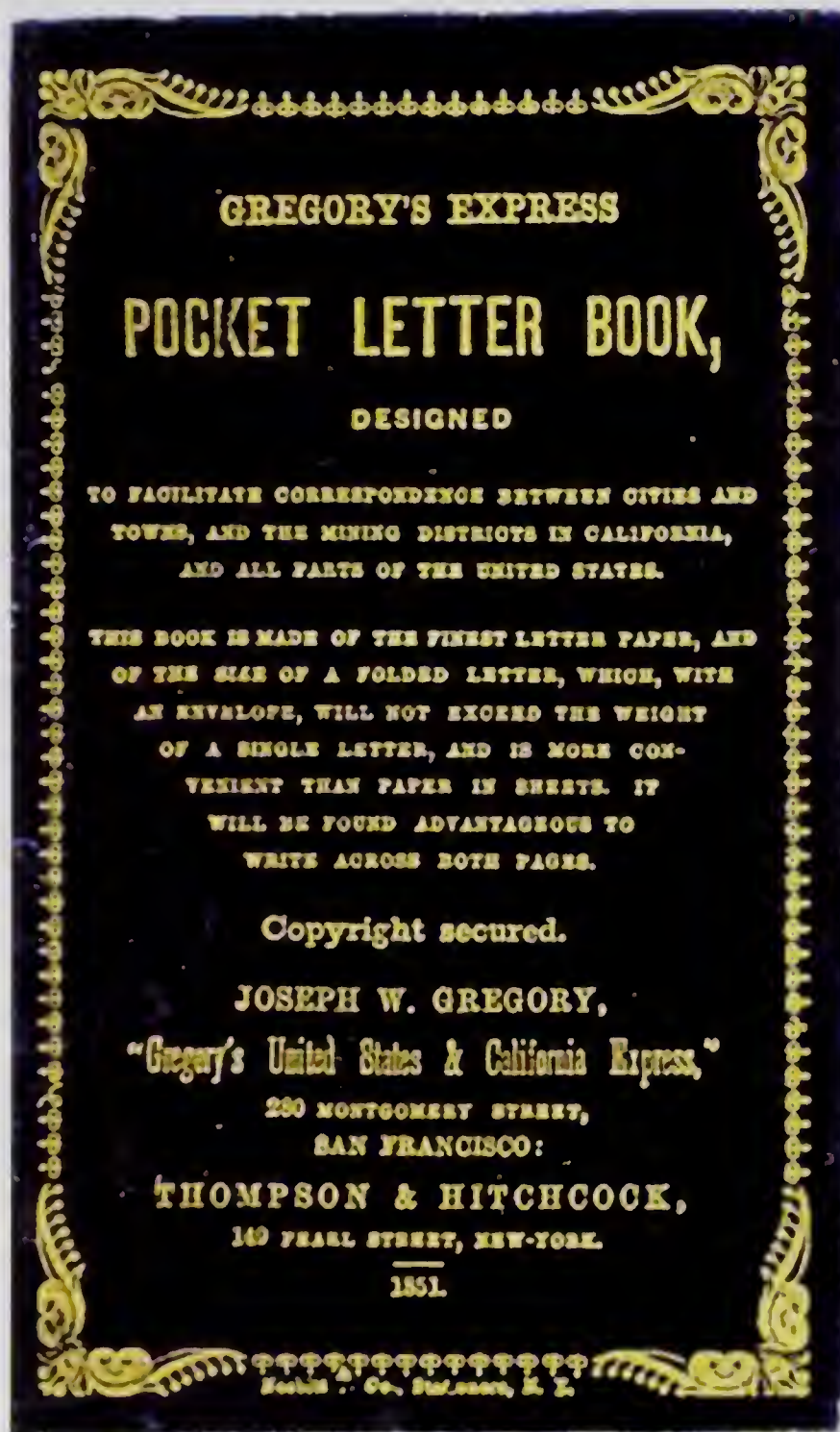
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LETTERS FROM THE CALIFORNIA MINES

The California Gold Rush as described by the miners

By Charlie Black, S.P.P.N. Life Member



Tens of thousands of citizens of the United States were joined by people from most of the continents during 1848 and thereafter in a migration to California in search of fame and fortune in the Californian gold fields. In conjunction with the American desire to find and mine gold was the need to communicate with family and friends in the "States" from which they originated. While most individuals wrote letters on the blue, lined paper which was common at that time, some utilized the Gregory's Express Pocket Letter Book which was manufactured for and marketed by Joseph W. Gregory (San Francisco, CA) and Thompson & Hitchcock (New York, NY). The Pocket Letter Book was 3 inches by 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches and the size of a folded letter with a guarantee that its contents, when completed, would not weigh more than a single letter.

I recently acquired a Gregory's Express Pocket Letter Book filled with correspondence from Henry Sappin, a miner located at Oregon Bar in the Mokelemy River (near Mokelumne Hill, CA) to his mother at the family home in Lyndonville, New York. The translation of the full text of the letter contains bits of Henry Sappin's philosophy concerning the pleasure of written correspondence, how numerous acquaintances during the trip from the States to California changed from being professed Christians to crass hypocrites, about his desire to soon visit his father and friends in New York before again returning to California, how the monetary return from mining had declined during the last eighteen months of mining, and his report of the prices of basic food provisions in September of 1851. Other commentary in the attached letter confirms that he, like most miners, definitely misses his family and friends as well as his claim that life in California has made him so self-sufficient that he no longer has the need to "get a wife" after ten years of looking for one.

I sincerely hope that you enjoy the reading of my translated letter as much as I enjoyed completing the translation.

1. Gold Mines Cala Orgeon Bar,, Mokelmy River September 21th 1851

Dear Mother,,

Your very Kind letter of July 17, was recd day before yest-erday pr Express ____ As usual the contents of your letter afforded a much real pleasure. The consciousness of being remembered by our friends is always pleasant I often think what a great blessing we enjoy in the priv-alige of letter correspondence Through this blest medium ____ friends, are enabled to conver-se & make an exchange of thought & felling although separated by Oceans & Deserts, And it is frequently the case, that even strangers, become/almost/

2. familiar acquaintances through this medium a case Here is ^ at hand. for instance I have never seen you, Still from the several letters I have had the pleasure of perusing, from your pen, It seems to me, that I have been acquainted with you for years. Words of kindness, always find a place, in the Heart of every person. & small incidents often form lasting friendships I am pleased to hear that old Yates still wags on It did at one time in my remembrance contain ____ wags enough, to make the Town appear quite-waggish indeed. But I suppose Town-individuals change with advancing years & like many of the Human Species there is often room for improvement. You letter contained one

3. piece of intelligence that really surprised me much. If the people of Yates, do of late years, "mind their own busi-ness" then indeed has there a great change come over that part of the world. It has greatly changed with-in the past 10 years. I once heard it related that a man away down in Vermo-ont did get rich by min-ding his own busi-ness. If it is a fact/ & I cannot ____ doubt it/the individual should have been lent to the Worlds Fair. Of this man is a Democrat he de-serves a Seat in the United States Senate

& cast-iron medal should be struck off for the State of Vermont in particular.

You will perceive that I am speaking of only State & not of the Yankees generally

4. You ask me. "Do you often YYY bestow a thought, on the subject of Death re ____! Yes. hours, days of Years. have I thought, reflected, studied thought till my brain was almost crazed. & the result All is profound Mys-tery & impenetratable darkness. Settle the mind on one point & another view of the case unsett-les it. Reflect, until you see light appear, in the distance. & in a moment. you are in the dark again. Surely "gre-at is the mystery of God-lines Some call me skeptic, but it is not the case. I must see things clear before I act. Are all things fore-ordained of God, I still man a free moral Agent! Can two opposites meet & not clash!

I believe in the existence of God, & He wills, so

5. will come to pass,, I have seen many that I believe are sincere Chris-tains. & truly enjoy themselves in their belief. But I look upon the great majority of professors as dishonest. For I believe many do not feel ____ what they profess. I crossing the Plains in/49. there were several proffessers in the train-men of standing in the Chur-ch at home. These with one single exception did not retain their profession six weeks after the commence-ment of our journey. In my first cisit to the City of Sacramento, I saw several acquaintances Gambling one a Methodis-t class leader one a ____ Baptist Deacon & I set those men down as base hypocrits. never pos-sessing on spark of prin





6. —ciple & only stumbling blocks for others to split on. Still I know all this does not alter or change the value of Religion nor remove ___ individual responsibility Your advice & admonitions are welcome Continue to write & express your views & sentiments with perfect freedom. If I do not act in accordance with ad-vice of my friends I love to have them advise. Do not judge me a Skeptic from my remarks ___ I am glad to hear of ___ Fathers good health. My great desire is to see him once more. & sincerely hope that this privalige may yet be granted. My first step, after leaving California, shall be to see my Father if he lives. You gave so glowing an

7. account of improvements made, & being made, & such kind attentions promised, that I think I could ___ spend a few weeks in Lyn-donville, very pleasantly I wish you to have a big arm rocking-chair ready for my use. Plently of Cod-fish on hand, & a good hard mattress, to sleep on, & I am with my friends as soon as possible to have written Home twice recently. once to Father & once to Marthar. In which I stated, about what time I thought of coming Home. I shall not probab-ly remain in Cala long-er than 18 months more & I may possibly within that time. This will dep-end in a great meas

8. —ure upon my Success in mining. I have made nothing all the season till quite recently. I have lately bought a fourth interest in a claim for \$80,, which I think will pay from \$8 to \$12,, pr day & give me employment all the fall. I take possession tomorrow. Mining is getting to be quite uncertain business ___ For the last six weeks. I have been averaging ¥¥ \$5.00 pr day. The same amount of labor 18 months ago wou-ld have made from 16 to 25 pr day. There has been a proportionate falling in other things. Provisions of all kinds & Miners supplies generally are low com-pared with former times & a much greater var

9. iety to be had. I will give the process of supplies at this point 56 miles from Sac City. Flour pr hundred 9\$

Pork 16\$ Sugar pr lb., 12 ½ \$ Cofee ,, 37 ½ Potatoes ,, 12 ½ Beans ,, 8 Mackerel pr piece ,, 25 & other things in proportion By doing our own cooking it cost us about ,, 75 pr day to live & we live very well, considering the character of the cooks. When I come to New York I will show you how to make the best bread that you probably ever saw. And frying Salt pork, I call myself per-feet in this line. If I make nothing in Cala, I shall learn something. Returned Californians will have no use for Wives Do their own cooking & washing & no thanks to the

10. Gals. Confound the Girls I have been trying for 10 years to get me a wife, & have just found out, that I do not need one in the least. I do not know how the new style of dress may affect me. Come see the Dear Ladies in the Bloomer Rig may overcome my resolutions in regard to my taking to myself a better half` in San Fran-cisco many of the Ladies have adopted the new style. In sacramento but a few have given up the old habit. I am of opinion the style will not be generally adopted ___ Although I think the sex would be wise to adopt some style different from the one in gener

11. al use. Something more adopted to ease & comfort. But no more on this subject. for fear I may venture on Ter-ritory where I have no right.

I am glad to hear from Sister Ann Poor Ann she has had her share of Sorrow & trouble. She was a good girl when I left Home Full of life, Ann will be happy yet. She is one of that peculiar class that adversity cannot kill, a woman of strong mind I should think. If She is with you still, give her a Brother warmest love for me

I suppose Miss Mary is quite a woman grown & probably quite forgotten her Brother Hank. I

12. recollect her very well at three years old. She was very pretty & could sing like a little Bird. Does she ever speak of me?

I pleased that I can hear from Harmans family through the

medium of your letters. He has never written me since I left the States. At least I

Have recd no communication from him.

I suppose he is so much wrapt up in the Law that he has forgotten his less worthy Brother G.W. Martin is still in the old place it seems. He is a good man & neighbor & deserves prosperity for his industry & perseverance. Please give him

13. & family my sincere regard

Is Esquire Clark still in Lyndonville? If so please present my respects when convenient. He is a man that has given me a great deal of good ___ advice in times gone by Your emntion Mr. Turtle having again moved to Yates. Some time since/ how long since, I have quite forgotten/Father mentioned in one of his letters that Ms Tuttle was laboring under partial derange-ment, & I have not heard since of her recovery. Ms T was a fine woman & I enjoyed myself very much in their family But those days like many others have past never to return.

14. rather strange affairs that of Capt Spaulding he deserves credit for his twenty years court-ship, think this is a longer term than the Law, prescribe-es in such cases. I presume he thought there was more pleasure in the pursuit of an object than in its possession.

Mr Seary returned with a very handsome sum for a six months stay in

California. I presume he did make it in the mines. As the largest ___ fortunes are made by speculation I did think when

I commenced this letter that I could fill the little book but I cannot for

15. want of time & want of material. A lengthy letter from me cannot be very interesting. The fact is I am no letter writer, & there is no use denying the charge. Therefore, think the less my Epistles contains the more acceptable, they will be to my friends In closing, let me say that the great desire for my Heart is once more to visit, the Home of my childhood. I love all the spot contains & you are all constantly, re-membereed by me. That ___ tho I seem to be all ___ absorbed, in a accumu-lating a little gold. Still there is not a night

but that my thoughts travel Home & as soon

16. as possible I will come Home I do not recollect of having mentioned in any of my letters, of having seen last summer. An old Townsman of ours Mr. Plass, formerly of Lyndon & more recently from Illinois within the last year I have not seen him Whenever I again visit the City I, will endeavor to find D. Heniva Please give my love to all the family. Write me as often as convenient accept my sincere regard for you happiness I remain affectionately
Yours

Henry Sappan

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On September 17, 2009, San Francisco commemorated the end of a constitutional crisis 150 years previously. California was in an uproar.

United States Senator David C. Broderick died on September 16, 1859, mortally wounded in a duel a few days previous by the Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court, David S. Terry. Only three years before, San Francisco had proven unable to govern itself, giving rise to the famed and necessary Committee of Vigilance. An argument might be made that the City has made no progress in this area.

A failed commission merchant undertook to set matters right. Joshua Abraham Norton (1818-1880) had traveled a winding road in life, and now he would make a turn that made him unforgettable. In 1820, John Norton brought his toddler son to Capetown, South Africa, where the elder Norton established the pioneer Jewish community and young Norton worked as a shopkeeper. The clarion call of 'GOLD!' sounded even in those far regions and prompted Joshua Norton to escape a humdrum existence. He took the inheritance from his father's estate to make a new beginning in a new land.

Joshua Norton arrived in California in November 1849 and became a commission merchant. One way communications to suppliers took 6 weeks and cargoes took up to 6 months to arrive in San Francisco. Businessmen made their best market guesses and then did the best they could. A commission merchant took charge of various cargoes as they sailed in, found buyers, held auctions, and took a percentage of the sale price. Norton's adeptness at this work gave him wealth and prominence, and in the summer of 1851, he became member #339 of the first Committee of Vigilance.

Norton invested in real estate and soon owned three of the four corners at Sansome and Jackson Streets; the Customs House had the southeastern block. One lot had an office building, the next a cigar factory, and the third, the first rice mill in the city. That grain brought Norton's downfall. He had contracted at a "bit" a pound for rice when the market price suddenly collapsed to 3 cents. Norton lost his fortune, some say his mind, but gained compassion and an empire.

On September 17, 1859, the San Francisco Bul-

letin announced the transformation of Joshua Norton and the City of San Francisco: "At the preemptory request of a large majority of citizens of these United States, I, Joshua Norton," he revealed, "declare and proclaim myself Emperor of these United States." Through the 1860s, His Majesty's irritation with politicians grew, and Emperor Norton I abolished the Presidency, Congress, the Republican and Democratic parties, and, to end the civil war south of the U.S. border, became the Protector of Mexico.

His Majesty's Imperial Proclamations always made good newspaper copy, and perhaps in an unconscious reflection on his own reversal of fortune, Norton I championed the underdog. His Majesty worked for religious tolerance and opposed enforcement of the Sunday Laws. Schools were especially important to the Imperial Realm, and the Emperor demanded that schools again teach German and French, as it was "absolutely necessary to teach the descendants of these foreign born people the language of their parents."

Similarly, His Majesty commanded that the City schools be desegregated and admit African Americans. Norton I correctly observed, "Whereas the American nation having acknowledged the citizenship of the colored people, their children are entitled to admission to the public schools." For the Chinese, Emperor Norton was five years ahead of the law when in 1868, he demanded "the evidence of Chinese to be taken . . . in all our Courts of law and justice." During the terrible 1870s, when the anti-Chinese movement reached a crescendo, His Majesty warned, "The eyes of the Emperor will be upon anyone who shall council any outrage or wrong on the Chinese."

Norton I also had ability as a civil engineer. On January 6, 1872, through the Official Imperial Newspaper, the African American Pacific Appeal, "We, Norton I, Dei gratia Emperor" ordered "that the bridge be built from Oakland Point to Telegraph [Rincon] Hill, via Goat [Yerba Buena] Island." Of course, the City did not get around to following this clear Imperial Command to bridge the Bay until 60 years later, which may equal the time needed to complete the replacement eastern span. Regardless, the mis-named Bay Bridge should be OFFICIALLY what it is in actuality: THE EMPEROR NORTON BRIDGE!

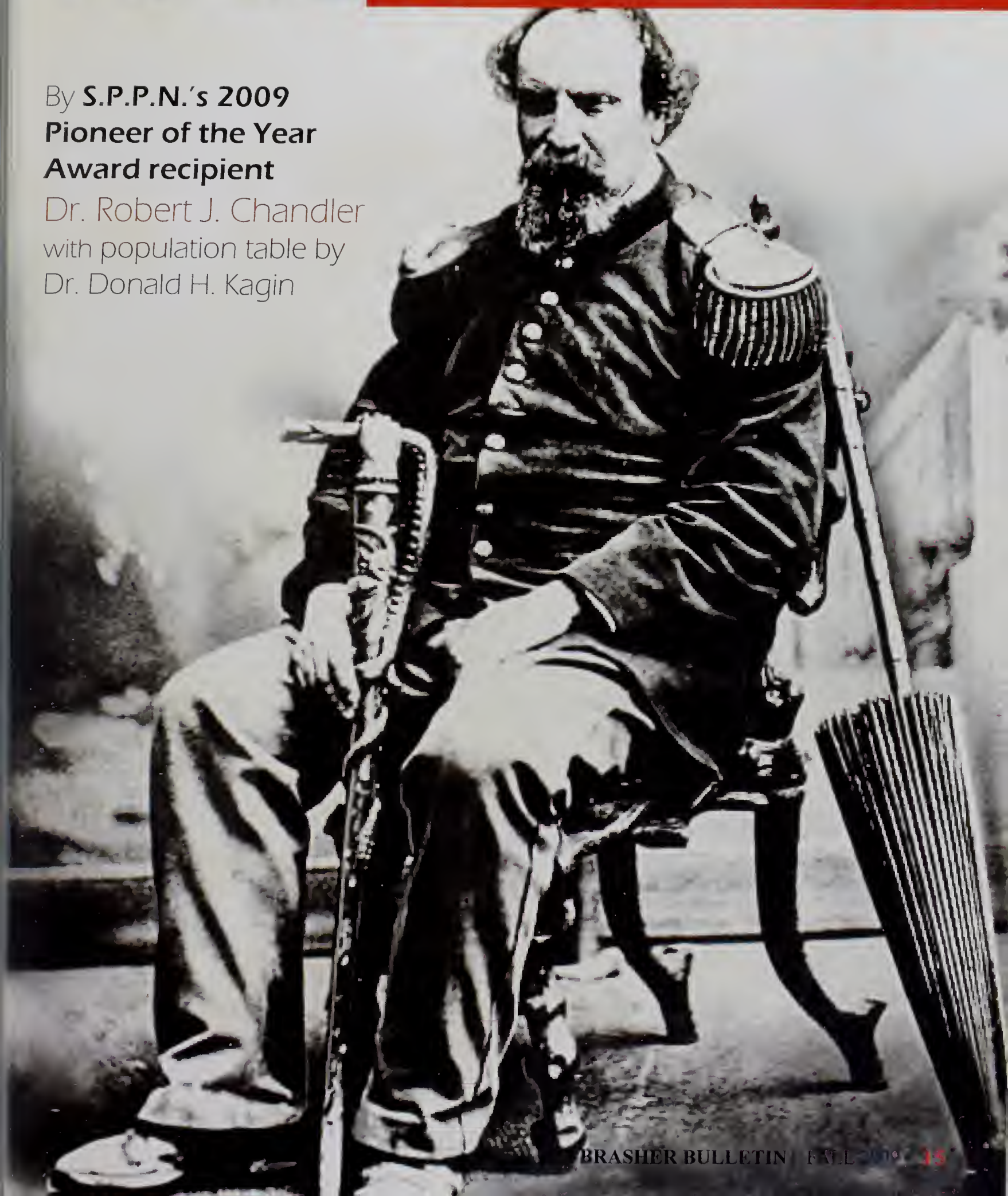
One of the rights of sovereignty is that of issuing money. Beginning in 1870, His Majesty exercised that privilege. The Bonds of Empire of His Majesty, Emperor Norton I are unique. They stand as the first paper money that Californians accepted at par. They were cashed at no discount—unlike U.S. Government greenbacks. Furthermore, His Majesty's notes found a place in Q. David

HAIL

NORTON!

By S.P.P.N.'s 2009
Pioneer of the Year
Award recipient

Dr. Robert J. Chandler
with population table by
Dr. Donald H. Kagin





Bowers' 100 Greatest Currency Notes (2005) and sell at auction for about \$25,000-\$30,000.

Don Kagin has catalogued 9 different styles and completed a census of three dozen examples. From September 1870 to his untimely death on January 8, 1880, His Majesty issued over 3,000 Bonds of Empire, mostly in 50-cent denominations, averaging 6 a week. From 1870 to 1877, printers John Cuddy and Edward C. Hughes is-

sued five designs and found a novel way to advertise their services as "Printers to His Majesty, Norton I." Cuddy & Hughes began printing a standard form for receipts, but in 1873, produced a respectable bond.

After this firm dissolved in 1876, Charles A. Murdock, who became one of San Francisco's fine printers, became His Majesty's "favorite printer." Murdock printed several denominations in three similar designs.

For those fortunate enough to possess one of His Majesty's "Bonds of Empire," REJOICE! Norton I, Emperor of the United States and Protector of Mexico, truly cared for his "subjects" and lives in the hearts of their descendants today.

"There have been other Emperors in the history of this world of ours, who have been out of their minds—their reigns were marked by violence and atrocity.... But ours was as none of these. Charity towards all and loving kindness and benevolence were in his heart."

Ernest A. Wiltsee, President,
The Emperor Norton Memorial Association

June 30, 1934.

Population & Provenance by Dr. Donald H. Kagin

TYPE	ID		DESCRIPTION	Printer	Interest	Grade	Date & Serial #	Notes/Pedigree
Type 1	1	50¢	Large Colummbia in front of S.F., Scene left/dog with key lying next to safe, lower center. Red ink.	Cuddy & Hughes	7%		11/11/70	Received of "James R. Hardenburgh". / <u>CHS</u>
Type 2	1	\$5	Portrait of Norton Top Center	Cuddy & Hughes	7%	VF	N.D.	Unsigned Remainder / Ex: Gillio, Kagin
	2	\$5	"		"		1/25/71 #3	/ Ex: <u>CHS</u>
Type 3	1	50¢	Portrait of Norton Left / Female head lower right. Purple stamp			Fine/VF	8/17/71 No Serial #	Internet 1/07 realized \$11,985. "Received of Thomas Donelly", Stacks 5/08:3633, [23,000]
	2	50¢	Portrait of Norton Left / Female head lower right. Red ink.	Cuddy & Hughes	7%		6/5/72 No Serial #	"Received of Thomas Donelly" / Newman Collection
	3	50¢	"		"		6/5/72 No Serial #	"Received by R.G. Donelly" handwritten /
	4	50¢	"		"	XF	7/3/1872 No Serial #	"Received by M.G. Elliott" handwritten / CHS, Marckhoff Plate, Drury Plate
Type 4	1	50¢	Portrait of Norton upper left / Female head upper right. Black ink.	Cuddy & Hughes	7%	PMG - Net 30	7/22/73 #1085 Lowest Serial #	/ Ex: Clifford 3/82:270 [\$2,420], dealer, Stacks 2/08:1766 [\$17,250],

	2	50¢	"	"	"	VF	7/10/74 #1417	/ Ex: Marckhoff Plate, Curly Mitchell, Dealer
Type 5	1	50¢	Portrait of Norton upper right / Standing Columbia with flag at left.	Cuddy & Hughes	7%	VF/XF	8/29/74 #1516	/ Ex: Clifford #271 [\$2,300], Kopenhaver
	2	50¢	"	"	"	VF/lower left much brown spotting	8/6/1875 #1736	Ex: Clifford 1964, Ford, Stacks 10/07:3036 [18,400]
	3	50¢	"	"	"		11/19/75 #1803	Listed in Marckhoff /
	4	50¢	"	"	"	VF Written on back in ballpoint ink	3/11/1876 #1911	rubber stamped "Cal Club". / Ex: Marckhoff plate, Stacks 1/02:488 [\$4,900], Kagins, Smythe 9/04.
	5	50¢	"	"	"	VF	07/14/76 #1944	Ex: Lyn Knight 10/16/08 [14,375]
	6	50¢	"	"	"	PMG - 30	11/14/76 #2057	/ Ex: "Seventy Five Years of History S.F.", John Howell Books 1925, Davis, William Heatsh, eBay, Dealer 5/05 Stacks 2/08:1770 [\$17,250], Kagins
	7	50¢	"	"	"		11/27/1876 #2069	whereabouts unknown, in Lane book / Ex: E.L. Finley
	8	50¢	"	"	"	VF	6/25/77 #2242	Illustrated in "Forgotten Characters of Old San Francisco" by Robert Cowan. Whereabouts unknown.
	9	50¢	"	"	"		8/29/77 #2311	<u>CHS</u>
	10	50¢	"	"	"		8/29/77 #2316	<u>CHS</u> facsimile
Type 6	1	50¢	Portrait of Norton upper right / California seal with large outer scallops upper right	Charles A. Murdock & Co.	5%	VF+	1/2/78 #2435	Coin & Currency dealer
	2	50¢	"	"	"	Fine	1/5/78 #2441	/ <u>CHS</u> Ex: Marckhoff plate
	3	50¢	"	"	"		2/18/78 #2511	/ Mentioned in Marckhoff
	3	50¢	"	"	"	Abt Fine	3/11/1878 #2533	/Ex:Norm Schultz 6/10/64, Ford XX, Stack's 10/07:3037 [34,500]
	4	50¢	"	"	"	Abt Fine	5/27/78 #2629	ragged edged and tears / Dressler (1927) plate
	5	50¢	"	"	"		5/28/78 #2644	collector/ dealer
	6	50¢	"	"	"		06/12/1878 #2663	/ Wells Fargo History Dep't
	7	50¢	"	"	"		7/10/78 #2682	/ Mentioned in Marckhoff; Newman
	8	50¢	"	"	"		7/10/79 #2936	/ Collector / dealer
Type 7	1	\$10	Portrait of Norton upper left / California Seal with small circle upper right	Charles A. Murdock & Co.			11/20/79 #1	/ <u>CHS</u> Ex: Marckhoff plate, Henry Clifford article
Type 7	2	\$10	"	"	"		11/20/79 #6	/ <u>CHS</u> ?

Type 8	1	50¢	Portrait of Norton upper left / California Seal with small circle upper right	Charles A. Murdock & Co.	4%	PMG - Net 20	12/19/79 #3004 Only note payable in 1890. Signed three weeks before Norton's death and endorsed "Deceased, Friday P.M. Jan,y 9/80"	Ex: Smythe 8/03:2121, Dealer, Stacks 2/08:1771 [\$23,000], Kagins
	2	50¢	"		"		12/19/79 #3005	/ Newman
	3	50¢	"		"		1/8/80 #3042	*Reported only*
Type 9	1	\$100	Portrait of Norton upper left / California Seal with small circle	Charles A.	5%		N.D.	/ Ex:Clifford,
	2	\$5	"	"	5%	XF+	1880 Unissued Remainder	/Ex: Charles Eberstadt, John Ford, 1962, Stack's XX 10/07:3038 [10,350]

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..... *coin crush*

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MOFFAT & COMPANY

Perhaps the Most Prolific Coiner of the California Gold Rush



Established in late 1848, the firm of Moffat & Company sailed for San Francisco in February of 1849, arriving sometime during the summer. Before producing coins, the company issued gold ingots of a variety of sizes, each stamped with their fineness and cash value. With the addition of the services of engraver George Kuner, the company began issuing Eagles and Half Eagles. In 1850, the company's reputation helped to secure Moffat & Company the contract to strike gold coins on behalf of the U.S. Assay office in San Francisco. At about this time, Moffat & Company stopped striking coins; however, in early 1852, the firm struck 8,650 \$10 gold pieces to satisfy local demand for denominations under \$50 – the lowest denomination that the Assay Office was authorized to issue at the time. When the Assay Office began issuing \$10 and \$20 coins in 1852, the Moffat name was again temporarily retired, not to be seen on a coin again until 1853, when Joseph Curtis and Philo Perry, two of Moffat's original partners, suspended operations at the Assay Office and began their own assaying firm, which issued \$20 gold coins bearing the familiar Moffat name on Liberty's tiara.

1852 \$10 Moffat & Co. Wide Date (Kagin-9) NGC MS61 – An extraordinary coin with loads of luster and lovely, coppery toning. This world-class example is probably the finest business strike of the variety (which is also known by a Specimen Strike). A highly important coin, with tremendous eye-appeal for the issue.

This rare and unique ingot was found along an old stage coach/shipping stop on the Owens Valley-Los Angeles Road sometime in the 1960's by an early



OWENS LAKE SILVER LEAD CO. SILVER-LEAD INGOT, c1870-1874

By Fred N. Holabird, copyright 2009

This rare and unique ingot was found along an old stage coach/shipping stop on the Owens Valley-Los Angeles Road sometime in the 1960's by an early metal detector enthusiast. After his death it was sold to a collector and is now in our hands. It is marked "O. L. S. L. Co.", with debossed letters, typical of the large "pig" style silver-lead bars from Eureka, Nevada and other locales. It weighs 83 pounds, and has been drilled for silver assay, which is 0.366 per cent silver. It measures 27.75" x 4" wide x 2.75" thick.¹

Large ingots of silver-lead are known from the Cerro Gordo region. Several decades ago, a group of at least three were reportedly discovered by a California man. Those bars were marked

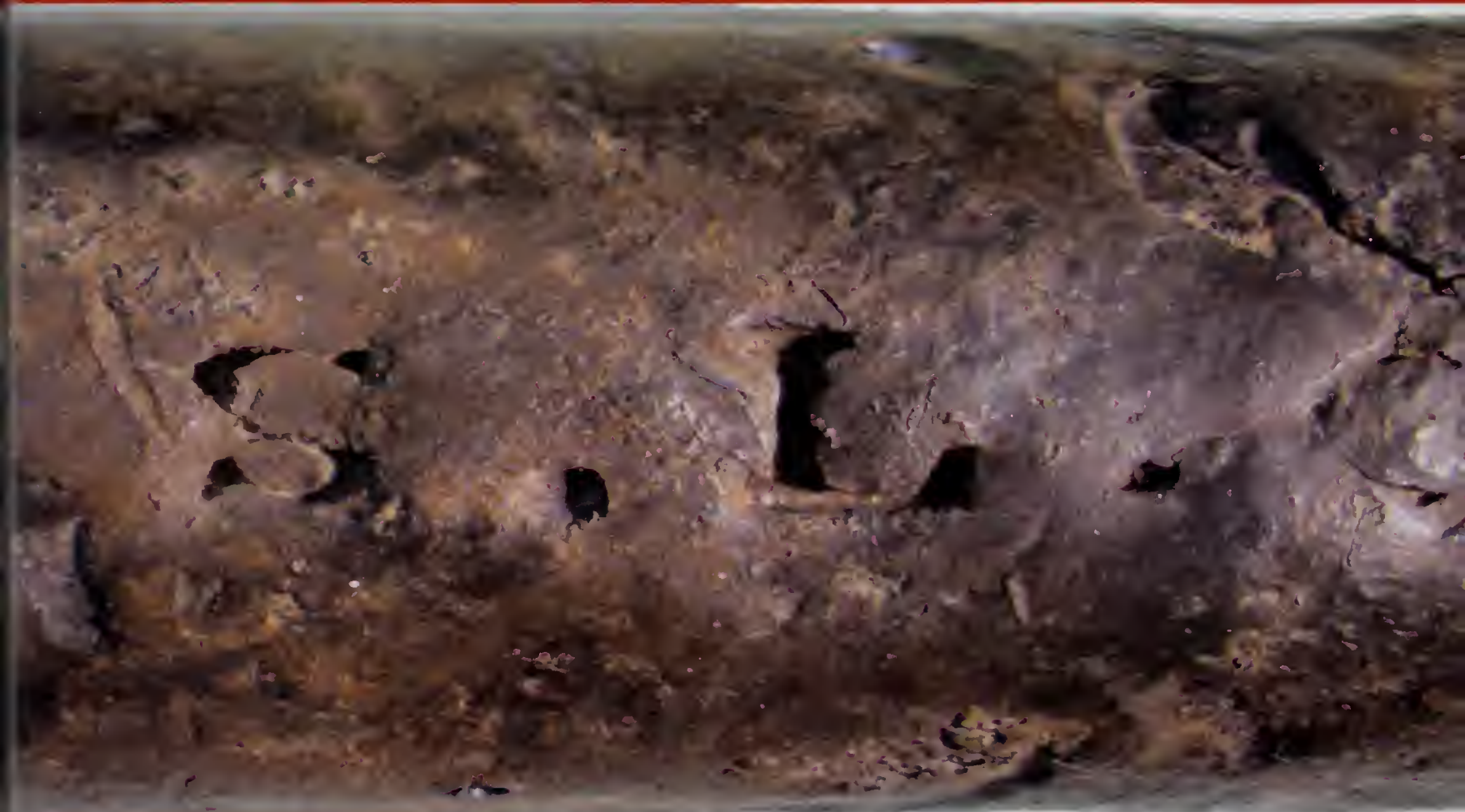
"Union" and "Cerro Gordo V.B." Two of those ingots (one each) are now in California museums.

The Owens Lake Silver Lead Company had a smelter at Swansea, California that processed Cerro Gordo ores. The first mention of the Company by exact name was in the Mining and Scientific Press on August 20, 1870: "At Swansea the smelting works of the Owens Lake Silver Lead Co. are kept in constant operation, running out stacks of silver-lead bars."² A series of three articles had begun to appear in the Mining and Scientific Press in 1870 describing the mines, smelters and general business of Cerro Gordo. The articles were all signed by "Crowquille", a clever nom de plume.

Cerro Gordo is a mining camp tucked in the Inyo range at an elevation of about 8500 feet. In an article in the Mining and Scientific Press in 1874, the author described it thus: "Cerro Gordo is 8250 feet above the level of the sea. The winter has been very severe, not having thawed for eighty days. Shocks of earthquakes are very frequent but do little or no damage."³ The mining camp itself got its start in the late 1860's, after many prospectors had discovered silver ores there in the early 1860's. A number of the early mines were worked by Mexicans, and there is a good chance the property as a whole was discovered by Mexican miners before 1860.

Cerro Gordo was in full production by

metal detector enthusiast... It weighs 83 pounds, and has been drilled for silver assay, which is 0.366 per cent silver. It measures 27.75" x 4" wide x 2.75" thick



1868 after an influx of cash by Mortimer Belshaw and Victor Beaudry, who both built large scale smelters at Cerro Gordo, completed in 1868. Belshaw was a successful assayer in Fiddletown, California in the heart of the Mother Lode Country. Beaudry was a prominent Los Angeles business man. Belshaw's furnace was the first completed. It was announced that "On March 17 M. E. Belshaw and E. Jordan started the first lead-silver smelter on the Pacific Coast, running ever since."⁴ It was further reported that more than 10,000 tons of silver-lead had been shipped to Selby, the private precious metals smelter and refiner located on the east side of San Francisco Bay, about 20 miles north of Oakland.

The two new smelters were processing lead-silver ores from Cerro Gordo's

largest mines, the Union and the Ignacio. Production was so large that the smelters couldn't keep up. A competitor company with a mine right next door to the Union built a new smelter at the foot of the mountains on the north shore of Owens Lake, a massive lake filling a fertile valley about twenty five miles long and ten miles wide.⁵ The competing company was the Owens Lake Silver Lead Company, formed in 1870 by New York capitalists. They built the new smelter at Swansea, named after the famous lead mine and smelter site in Great Britain, and owned the Santa Maria and Omega mines, which provided more than enough ore to keep the smelter busy full time. James Brady was the superintendant.⁶ The ore was brought to the smelter by a tram built from the mine at Cerro Gordo down the steep

mountains about five miles to Swansea. "At Swansea, the smelting works of the Owens Lake Silver Lead Co. are kept in constant operation, running out sticks of silver lead bars," reported the *Mining and Scientific Press* on August 20, 1870.⁷

The production at the mill was well described in the *Mining and Scientific Press*: "Two 14 mule teams loaded daily, for Los Angeles, each taking 340 bars of 85 pounds each at a trip." "Although 100 teams are engaged, they are three months behind with the transportation as the works now have 23,000 bars on hand."⁸ Production was so furious that "all parties are making bullion faster than it could be moved economically by teams."⁹ Reports of the geology of the Santa Maria and Omega suggested that perhaps their ore shoot was the same



Clockwise, from left: Owens Lake Silver Lead Furnace plaque, Victor Beaudry, A portion of Cerro Gordo mine silver, produced between 1880 and 1948; stacked up on the shores of Owens Lake.

as the Union's ore shoot. The Union Mine mining claim had been staked first, and thus held seniority in the case of an "apex" dispute. As all the mines plunged deeper, the ores apparently came together, and the Santa Maria had to stop mining. The Union's superior title forced the hands of the New Yorkers, and the slow process of a settlement was started. Meanwhile, in November 1874, the Owens Lake Silver Lead Company smelter shut down. "The Santa Maria and Omega mines and smelting works owned by the Owens Lake Silver and Lead Co. are now idle, but are expected to start up soon."¹⁰ Little did they know at the time that nothing would happen for another eight years. At the time, the base bullion produced by the various furnaces at Cerro Gordo and Swansea was about 12.5 tons per day per smelter for the three smelters. The bullion from the Union and San Ignacio was worth about \$115 in silver and \$90 in lead per ton. It was reported that the lead paid the cost of transportation to San Francisco, and the smelting and refining cost \$25 per ton leaving a profit of about \$90 per ton. The cost of mining was not included in the information.¹¹

The massive production of the Cerro Gordo mines spawned an entire new transportation business. The problem was getting the base bullion (not called dore because it was not all precious metals, but contained base metals as well as precious metal) to the refiner. The Selby Smelting and Refining Company's operation was located on the eastern shores of San Francisco Bay, and getting heavy bullion bars there was a problem. The easiest route was overland by wagon to Los Angeles, then loaded onto ships and run up the coast to San Francisco and into the smelter on the far side of the bay. The production was huge, and an entire fleet of teamsters was needed to take bullion to Los Angeles. There were not enough mules and horses to manage the more than 100 teams that worked the Cerro Gordo to Los Angeles route during the circa 1870-1874 period. Another business that was created was a water borne shipping business from Swansea on the east end of Owens Lake to the west end. "Some forty or fifty miles of exceedingly bad road around the upper end of the lake are thus avoided, and the distance to Los Angeles is considerably shortened. To

that point, distant not less than two hundred and seventy five miles, all the bullion has so far been shipped, the road leading over sandy deserts most of the way."¹² The bullion was shipped on the westward voyages, and the east bound voyages carried wood and charcoal heading to the mines. "Wood and charcoal are brought across the lake in a flat boat from the Sierra Nevada, at the Cottonwood Canyon, a distance of fifteen miles."¹³ Steam boats were also regularly used for shipping the silver lead ingots on Owens Lake.

The average daily product of the smelters at Cerro Gordo was about 140 to 148 bars per day weighing 83 pounds each. In 1873, Beaudry's furnace had 12,000 bars waiting for shipment over and above what they could normally ship. Belshaw's furnace had 8,000 more than they could ship.¹⁴ The Swansea operation was also overloaded because of a rich strike at the Omega tunnel. In 1873, Beaudry's furnace produced 4,530 bars in the month of May-June, a record for the district at the time.¹⁵ "Some 20,000 pigs are out waiting transportation" cited an article in the *Mining and Scientific Press* in April, 1873. The

“pigs” consisted of “argentiferous galena, in bars.”¹⁶

The product in 1871-1872 from the Swansea operation reportedly was 620 tons of lead running \$120 to \$340 per ton silver, according to a report to Ross Raymond in *Mines and Mining West of the Rocky Mountains*.¹⁷ Both Belshaw and Beaudry’s furnaces were producing almost twice as much each. The term “pig” was coined because of the style of bullion mould that allowed for the rendering of handles on each end of an approximate two foot long ingot. The handles were called “ears”, and the pig nomenclature came because of the heavy weight. The process of pouring the bullion was rather crude. Large crucibles were used at the furnaces, and the impurities floating at the top of the molten metal were removed first. “When this scum is removed, the lead is dipped with an iron ladle and poured into iron moulds, forming pigs. 83 pounds in weight. This sized furnace ages 80 such pigs in 24 hours when the furnaces are running well.”¹⁸

The mines at Cerro Gordo were so prolific in production that they attracted some of the great mining superintendents of the Comstock. John Winters made statements that he was leaving for Cerro Gordo in the early 1870’s, and may have done so for a short while, but returned to master mines in Gold Hill and cause trouble for local assayer Conrad Wiegand.¹⁹

The Owens Lake Silver Lead Co. apparently ceased operation in 1874, probably because of legal issues associated with the Apex law. National mining laws were passed by Congress in 1872, bringing an end to an old mining justice system that was based on crude laws and regulations made for each specific mining district. Six and a half years later, the mill at Swansea came back to life. The Owens Lake Silver Lead Co. had left a slag pile of 8,000 tons. A mining engineer sampled the slag, and the new company separated the lead from the dark black, silver-rich slag which

was then turned into cash at the rate of \$16 per ton. Two new companies succeeded the old Owens Lake Silver Lead Co., the Owens Lake Silver Mining Co., and the Owens Lake Mining & Milling Co. By April, 1881, the old mill was back in operation. “2 bars of fine silver were shipped from the Owens Lake Company mill worth about \$800 each.” J. H. Holt and J. Keeler built a new mill after finding the old mill not fully useful.²⁰

Curiously, the name of the company was reported differently in US Mineral Commissioner Ross Raymond’s *Mines and Mining West of the Rocky Mountains* in 1873 for the calendar year 1872. While the Mining & Scientific Press used very specific company names as reported in letters sent to the Press from Cerro Gordo, the Raymond volume cited reports by 2 gentlemen who wrote the report after they left the mining region. They cited the company as “Owens Lake Silver Mining and Smelting Co.” The distinct possibility exists that the O.L. S. & L. Co. had a wholly owned subsidiary to run the smelter at Swansea, but the reality may be that they simply forgot the exact name.²¹

The existence of this rare and unique ingot is remarkable in itself. The discovery point must have been a way station on the Los Angeles road at a place that must have had a very rough spot that could have knocked off one of the three hundred plus bars from a wagon load shipment, or perhaps the wagon got caught in a mud hole with an ingot falling out into mud, so that it never appeared missing until the final tally was taken in Los Angeles. Regardless, the discovery of the ingot has led to a new understanding of mining history at Cerro Gordo and its satellite mill city, Swansea.

¹ Assayed by Jacobs Assay, Tucson, April 22, 2009.

² P124.

³ April 11, 1874, p235. It has also been reported that the major earthquake of 1872, which destroyed the nearby town of Lone Pine, changed the configuration of the Owens Lake shoreline, dropping it further to the west.

⁴ Mining & Scientific Press, April 11, 1874, p235.

⁵ When the Los Angeles Water project was put in place by Mulholland and others after 1910, Owens Lake began to dry up. LA had secured the water rights to all the tributaries, built a massive aqueduct system to contain the water, and no more water naturally flowed into the lake. It took about 80 years to dry up, and the valley gradually lost its fertility and became a desert. As the lake dried up, evaporate deposits were created, allowing for the mining of salts for decades.

⁶ 7/23/1870, p58, Mining & Scientific Press
⁷ P124

⁸ April 11, 1874, p235.

⁹ Raymond, Ross; *Mines and Mining West of the Rocky Mountains*. 1874, p60.

¹⁰ Mining & Scientific Press, November 21, 1874, p324

¹¹ Mining & Scientific Press, 11/21/1874, p324

¹² Raymond, Ross; *Mines and Mining West of the Rocky Mountains*, 1873, p21.

¹³ 7/23/1870, p 58, Mining & Scientific Press.

¹⁴ 6/7/1873 p357 Mining & Scientific Press

¹⁵ 6/14/73 Mining & Scientific Press

¹⁶ 5/14/1870, p324

¹⁷ 1873, p20-21.

¹⁸ 6/18/1870 Mining & Scientific Press p410

¹⁹ 5/21/1870 Mining & Scientific Press, p340. Also 12/10/1870, p394. Winters was going to build a tram from Kearsarge to a mill at Owens Lake. See also article on Wiegand by Holabird in *Rush for Gold*, 2008

²⁰ April 9, 1881, 5/21/1881, 5/28/1881, 10/15/1881, p253. Mining & Scientific Press.

²¹ A further clue about the name problem comes from other aspects of their report to Raymond, in which Beaudry’s name is consistently misspelled as Beaudroy.

Remember
to renew your
S.P.P.N.
Membership
Today!

THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH & SALT LAKE CITY GOLD COINS

Mormons returning to Salt Lake from California often had only pouches of gold dust. They needed a way not only to transact business in Deseret but as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, they needed to pay their tithing. **Brigham Young immediately understood the problem and the need for a circulating medium.** In November, 1848 initial preparations were made by Brigham Young to coin the gold from California.

by Douglas A. Nyholm





Closely intertwined with the beginnings of coinage in Deseret is the formation of the Mormon Battalion. The United States declared war on Mexico on May 13, 1846. One of the assignments of the Mormon Battalion was to build a wagon road to California for the purpose of transporting supplies to the army stationed in California. On July 7th, 1846 Brigham Young addressed this issue and an initial group of 66 men volunteered. In less than a month the quota was filled, and on July 16, 1846 the volunteers enlisted into service for a period of 12 months. There were approximately 500 male volunteers who were joined by 35 women and many children.

The battalion drew its full year clothing allowance at the beginning of the march and sent it back to their destitute families at Council Bluffs, Iowa. They left with the same clothes and shoes they had worn when they were forced out of Nauvoo. As a group they sent back more than \$20,000. The Mormon Battalion began its march of 2,100 miles from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas on August 1, 1846.

The march from Fort Leavenworth to San Diego was

perhaps one of the longest infantry marches in history. The paymaster was amazed that the battalion men, unlike most soldiers, could sign their names. In fact, the several detailed journals kept by the Battalion members made this one of the best documented military marches in history.

On Jan 27, 1847 the Mormon Battalion sighted the Pacific Ocean, and on Jan. 29th the march ended. After being discharged, many of the men quickly left to travel towards the Salt Lake Valley. A small contingent went to San Francisco late in the summer of 1847. The Salt Lake Valley was barren, and food very scarce that first winter, so Brigham Young told the Battalion that after reaching the coast they could stay and work there if they wished. However, he also informed them that the new Temple would be built in the Rocky Mountains, and they would have to travel there to receive their Endowments. The portion of the Battalion that proceeded onto northern California were some of the original participants in the discovery of gold and the beginning of the gold rush. These Mormon pioneers later brought the first gold into the Salt Lake Valley.

Below: Map of the "Longest Infantry March in History" of the Mormon Battalion.



Brigham Young led the first group of pioneers, numbering 138, into the Salt Lake Valley in July of 1847. They brought with them approximately \$50 in coin. On a subsequent trip Brigham Young returned with \$80 in coin. Initially coinage to conduct business was not needed. However, as more Saints began arriving, the barter system needed to be augmented in order to conduct business. The \$130 provided by Brigham Young was the majority of coinage initially utilized in the Salt Lake Valley. At this time, coinage from many foreign countries also circulated in the U.S., including that from Asia, Central America, and European countries. No doubt many foreign coins were in daily use.

During the time of the gold rush, commerce in the West was predominately transacted without the benefit of coins or currency. In fact, paper currency was illegal for a time in California. The only coins in common use were Spanish doubloons, pillar dollars from Mexico, French francs and the occasional U.S. coin that had worked its way to the west by gold seekers and travelers from the east. Gold nuggets, and more commonly, gold dust, were often used to transact business. There were obvious problems with

this, as one can imagine. The inability to properly weigh the gold, and the purity or fineness of the gold (even if properly weighed), could vary. Transactions were often conducted by a pinch or pinches of gold dust. In San Francisco legend has it that tavern owners often hired large men with big hands in order to be able to pinch more gold dust than someone smaller. Mormons returning to Salt Lake from California often had only pouches of gold dust. They needed a way not only to transact business in Deseret (the name commonly used for Utah at the time), but as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, they needed to pay their tithing. Brigham Young immediately understood the problem and the need for a circulating medium. The Salt Lake valley would grow from less than 2,000 inhabitants in 1848 to over 12,000 in 1850. Salt Lake City had also become an important overland stop for travelers from the east to the gold fields of California. There was virtually no circulating coin or hard currency available. The barter system generally worked well for the local Mormons; however, people passing through the valley required something tangible to take with them after doing business in Deseret.

Mormon Coinage Timeline



In November, 1848 initial preparations were made by Brigham Young to coin the gold from California. According to church history and Brigham Young's journal entries, the first time the idea of "Mormon" gold coinage was discussed was by Brigham Young and John Taylor on Nov. 25, 1848.

Brigham Young was very concerned that many of the Saints just arriving in Salt Lake would join the gold rush and travel to California. He admonished them to stay and promised that they would be blessed by the Lord.

Brigham Young

The first form of currency available in Salt Lake City was in the form of small packages of gold dust from California. Dr. Willard Richards of the Church's First Presidency weighed the gold dust from returning Mormon Battalion members and others who had worked the gold fields. He packaged the gold dust in varying amounts, in small sealed packages, with their value noted on the outside. To ensure their value, these packages were sealed and signed by both Brigham Young and Dr. Richards. They were subsequently used for transactions in Salt Lake until coin became available.



Inscriptions and design elements of what was to appear on the coins were decided upon, and work began to prepare the dies from which the coins would be struck. The obverse of the coinage had a "three-pointed Phrygian Crown" above an all-seeing eye. This was the emblem of the "Holy Priesthood." Inscribed around this priesthood emblem were the words, "Holiness To The Lord" (See Exodus 28:36). "And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold and engrave upon it, like the engravings of a signet Holiness To The Lord." On the reverse side, the denomination was inscribed below a pair of clasped hands in the

center. Above the hands were the words "Pure Gold." On the other 1849 denominations the words "Pure Gold" was replaced with G.S.L.C.P.G., which is the abbreviation for "Great Salt Lake City Pure Gold."

One interesting note in regard to Mormon gold coinage comes from a letter dated July 17, 1849 written by Ben Carpenter while in Salt Lake City. This letter sold in the 1982 Henry Clifford sale conducted by Bowers & Ruddy.

**Striking of
1850 dated \$5
gold coin**

**Coinage of
1860 dated \$5
gold coin**

**End of
Mormon coins
as a medium of
exchange in
general
circulation**

Mar. 1850

1860

1862

It comments on Mormon Gold as follows:

"Mormons say they have plenty of gold near them, had established a mint of their own. I have seen the coin, vignette, on one side a mountain & and eye, on the other a Sea Gull. They say the Lord sent millions of Sea Gulls last year to destroy the crickets – before they came the valley was filled with them."

This is very interesting as no coin with the above description exists today. Was it an actual coin, an engravers rendition on paper, or a test pattern contemplated for actual coinage? We will probably never know and once again this story makes for interesting conjecture.

The dies and tools pictured later in this article are currently owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They are on display at the Church Historical Museum in downtown Salt Lake City. These dies and tools were once privately owned, and the Church took advantage of an opportunity to purchase them in 1909.

It is interesting to note that this was the first time a religious motto, "Holiness To The Lord," was used on a circulating coin in the United States. It wouldn't be until 15 years later, at the end of the Civil War, that the United States would authorize the now familiar motto "In God We Trust" on circulating U.S. coins. This was the result of a general public movement toward religion, brought about by sentiments during the Civil War. Pictured below is an example of the U.S. 2-cent coin bearing this motto. This coin was the first coin to incorporate the motto "In God We Trust." The 2-cent coin was short-lived, and they were minted only during the years 1864-1873. During subsequent years the motto "In God We Trust" was added to all denominations of U.S. coinage, and it is now law that it be



U.S. 2-Cent coin bearing the motto "In God We Trust."

part of all U.S. coins. Prior to the adoption of "In God We Trust" several variations were proposed. These included "God Our Trust," and "God And Our Country."

On the following page are three Mormon \$5 gold coins.

Notice the date and the almost unreadable numeral 8 of the date in the top coin. This is not due to wear, but a problem encountered in striking the coin. The tools used to manufacture the Mormon gold coins and the manual labor to physically strike the coins, often resulted in incomplete devices and legends on the coins. The \$2 ½ coins suffered additional problems as the obverse die became bulged or warped. This resulted in many poor quality strikes.

In December, 1848 the first gold was deposited in the Church offices, and the dies with which to strike the coins were complete. The building which was used as the mint was located on the northeast corner of Brigham Street, now South Temple and Main. This is roughly where the



Above is a photograph of the actual die used to strike the first \$10 Mormon gold Coins. Courtesy of the Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

parking garage for the old Hotel Utah is located. In 1848 the rate at which gold traded was \$16.00 an ounce. On December 12, 1848 the first 25 \$10 Mormon gold coins were minted. These were dated 1849, as were all the other



Pictured here is a high grade example of an 1849 \$5 gold coin.

The other "first" is that Brigham Young and the Deseret mint preceded all of the California mints in producing coins from native California gold.

There was hyper-inflation for goods due to the excessive

demand by the workers in the gold fields for everything from provisions to mining supplies. There were reports that a barrel of flour sold for \$100, doctors were charging

\$50-100 for a visit, and cooks were making as much as \$25 a day! It is difficult to imagine just how much actual gold was in everyday life in San Francisco, and to a lesser extent in Salt Lake City, during the middle of the 19th century. Some early miners reported finding a pound of gold a day for weeks!

A story related by Sheridan McGarry, in his 1950 book *Mormon Money* tells of Father Rhoads and his famous 60 pound sack of gold. In 1848 Father Rhoads arrived in Salt Lake City with several sacks of gold, the largest being 60 pounds. This was the largest amount of gold ever brought into Salt Lake City. Father Rhoads turned the 60 pounds of gold over to Brigham Young, who in return, had a home built for him. This story was talked about for quite some time in the "Valley." No doubt, this gold was very soon turned into coin.

Other Mormon coin denominations of 1849

The coins dated 1849 all carried essentially the same design on both the obverse and reverse. The only significant variation was the value. This was true for all minted denominations of \$2 1/2, \$5, \$10 and \$20 pieces. In 1850 there was additional \$5 gold coins minted, but they carried

denominations which were actually minted later in 1849. A few days later, additional \$10 pieces were minted, bringing the estimated total to 46 pieces. Upon examining the \$10 dies it is apparent that they are worn and appear to have struck significantly more than the 46 coins documented in Church records. We may never know if or how many additional coins were struck or what may have become of them. Today the Mormon \$10 gold piece is extremely rare, with only 10-12 pieces known to exist. Two of the known \$10 coins are currently held by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. If you desire to own one of these you can expect to pay over \$350,000. The other denominations were minted the following year. These consist of \$2.50, \$5.00 and \$20.00 denominations. Again, the \$10 coin was unique in that it had "Pure Gold" spelled out, while all subsequent 1849 dated denominations used the abbreviation of "G.S.L.C.P.G."

The interesting "first" concerning the \$20.00 coin is that it preceded the minting by the United States of the regular issue \$20.00 coin or "double eagle," by several days. Prior to 1849, the largest coin in circulation in the U.S. was the \$10.00 gold coin or "eagle." Because of the California gold rush, very large quantities of gold were flooding into the vaults and treasuries in the west and the \$20 denomination was seen as a way to absorb these vast quantities of raw gold.

Estimated mintage figures and current 2008 value of Mormon gold coins Most were melted in the mass meltings of territorial gold in 1852.

Date	Denomination	Est. Mintage	Est. Known	Current Value*
1849	\$2.50	3,560	40-50	\$35,000 +
1849	\$5.00	5,340	80-90	\$22,000 +
1849	\$10.00	46 ?	10-12	\$350,000 +
1849	\$20.00	1,808	25-30	\$200,000 +
1850	\$5.00	3,560	50-60	\$35,000 +
1860	\$5.00	789	35-45	\$75,000 +

a modified design from previous 1849 coins.

The Mormon gold coins, or “Valley Coin” as they were locally referred to, almost immediately came under scrutiny from outside interests. Brigham Young intended these

“Valley Coins” to alleviate the immediate shortage of hard currency in Deseret. However due to their intrinsic gold value, they, like most hard currency, began to circulate outside of the Salt Lake area. Within a year they were seen east of the Mississippi, where they were tested for fineness and value. Immediately they were found to contain much less than their face value of gold. Coinage produced at the U.S. mints in the 19th century was such that the coin contained the same amount of precious metal (gold or silver) as the stated value of the coin. Word of the undervalued Mormon gold coins spread rapidly, and immediately they were accepted only at a discount, and in

some cases, refused altogether. There were newspaper accounts that labeled the Mormon coins as “vile falsehoods” and worse. It is doubtful that Brigham Young intended this to be the case, but even if it had been known that this would happen, it probably couldn’t have been avoided as the intent was to simply and expeditiously as possible create a circulating medium.

There was no one in Salt Lake who was experienced in the skills of assaying, and the precise equipment to perform exact assaying was unavailable there at the time. These facts most likely account for the extremely low survival rate of Mormon gold coins today. Most territorial gold coins were later melted. But the fact that the Mormon coins were discounted below even their light gold weight

(or refused) gave even more reason to melt them and utilize the gold in some other coin or transaction.

To be fair, there were several private mints in California which also had similar problems with underweight gold

coins. According to some reports, most of the private mints issued underweight coins. This was due to a built-in profit margin that the private territorial mints incorporated. Normally it was only a few cents (4 or 5 cents) which seemingly didn’t matter at the time. However, when the difference became greater, problems arose. Only the largest and best equipped operations, along with the U.S. Assay Office in San Francisco (which preceded the U.S. Mint), were able to avoid the problem of underweight coins.

The 1850 \$5 Mormon Gold Coin

It is not completely clear why the design change was made. The design had slight modifications to both the eye and Phrygian cap on the obverse and the clasped hands on the reverse. There is also the addition of 9 stars circling the eye and cap on the obverse.

The number 9 signifies judgment, and thus the intended message would translate to the “Judgment of Jehovah.” The design change was also possibly



Three Examples of Mormon Gold

Denom.	Date	Min. Gold Content
\$2.50	1849	\$2.25
\$5	1849 / 1850	\$4.30
\$10	1849	\$7.86
\$20	1849	\$16.90
\$5	1860	\$5.00*

just an attempt to create a coin with an improved design. The 1849 design was simpler, and the \$5 denomination

was the most common coin, with over 5,000 being struck. Dies did have a finite life and the 1849 die would definitely have been worn. In any event, this new 1850 dated \$5 coin was created and minted.

The 1850 dated coin was the last coinage struck until the 1860 \$5 coin. Minting of the 1850 coin continued thru June, 1851. Additional coins of this type were struck in 1852-53, but were immediately redeemed and melted. They were coined from even poorer gold from Carson City, Nevada, and were extremely underweight. It is doubtful that any of these coins were ever released for use

in commerce. The most obvious reason for the discontinuance of Mormon gold coinage was likely due to the fact that the coins were underweight, and, as stated, discounted or sometimes refused.

“White Notes” and re-issued Kirtland currency were soon brought forth, which helped fill the need for a circulating medium. The combinations of these were referred to in Salt Lake City as “Valley Notes.” The majority of the currency was redeemed and destroyed by 1853. The U.S. Government had established a mint in San Francisco which began operations in 1854. Additionally, dozens of territorial mints in California continued to mint gold coin of full value (or much closer to full value than the Deseret Mint). A few of these private mints operated for a time after the San Francisco mint opened, but those left in 1862 ceased operation due to the law passed by Congress outlawing the private minting of coin.

Grading & Characteristics of Mormon Gold Coinage

Grading of Mormon gold coins can be quite difficult which is evident by the many variances seen in both NCG and PCGS slabs. One of the reasons is the rarity of Mormon gold. There are not many more than 150 examples known of all 6 issues combined. Many are locked up long term in great collections, thus leaving any single grader very few opportunities with which to build experience.



Pictured here is an example of a Mormon \$2 ½ coin struck with bulged dies, as you can see much detail is missing. This coin was graded AU53 by PCGS.

Additionally, a characteristic of Mormon gold, as well as many other territorial issues, differs from the outset when compared to U.S. Federal gold coinage. Many territorial mints, including the Deseret Mint in Salt Lake City, lacked not only expertise in the minting of coin, but they also had sub-standard equipment to mint the actual coins. The resulting coins which fell directly off of the dies, if exam-

Design	Symbolic Message
Eye	Symbolizing the all-seeing eye of Jehovah.
Phrygian Crown or Bishops Mitre Hat	Signifying the Emblem of the Holy Priesthood. Anciently this hat was worn by freed slaves in Rome.
9 Stars (1850)	Indicating Judgment. i.e. – Surrounding the eye would indicate the judgment of God.
Inscription	Holiness to the Lord – Taken from Exodus 28:36.
Beehive (1860)	Symbol of industry, used as a symbol for the State of Deseret, which later became Utah.
Clasped Hands	Friendship / Strength in Unity.
Lion	Lion of Judah.
Great Salt Lake City Pure Gold	This inscription abbreviated G.S.L.C.P.G. Salt Lake City was originally named Great Salt Lake City. The word “Great” was later dropped by a vote taken in 1868.
Three Mountains	The presence of the three mountains on the 1860 original obverse die represents the three members of the Godhead.



The actual dies used to strike the 1850 gold coin along with some original tools. Courtesy of the Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Mormon Gold Coin Characteristics

Date	De-nom.	Characteristics
1849	\$2 ½	Shallow relief die which bulged early in its life of striking coins resulting in most \$2 ½ coins with weak devices on both sides.
1849	\$5	There are seven checkpoints for authentication of this issue as noted herein. Double stamping of the crown in three places (3); doubling of the upper right portion of the eye(4); re-engraving of a portion of the crown(5); and a portion of the crown punch producing a dimple on the right side of the crown.(6) All of this in addition to miss-aligned lettering(7) on shallow relief dies.
1849	\$10	Shallow relief dies.
1849	\$20	Shallow relief dies.
1850	\$5	Shallow relief dies.
1860	\$5	Original die shattered prior to striking gold coins and all 1860 coins were struck from new modified dies.

ined by today's standards would, in many cases be graded less than mint state. Specifically with Mormon gold, the dies for all denominations of the years 1849 and 1850 were engraved with shallow relief which resulted in many coins having a poor appearance to begin with. Additionally, the gold used for the coins varied in the amount of gold and alloy in the metal, both naturally and added during the minting process. This also resulted in differences in the color of the coins.

There are specific characteristics known with the individual dies used to strike Mormon gold too. These include re-engraving, bulged dies, and various other problems. These characteristics are listed in table #5.

Due to the escalating prices in the current market for Mormon Gold the practice of re-submitting to the major grading services to achieve a higher grade also occurs. If the lucky owner happens to get his coin back with a one or two point boost the potential financial reward is great. This practice directly corresponds with my initial point that the inexperience of professional graders due to the extreme rarity of Mormon gold can easily result in a mis-graded coin. Also in today's market it is most common that a grading error will result in an over-graded coin, not an under-graded example. I have seen an XF45 Mormon gold coin slabbed in an AU55 holder, but for the most part even with commercial graders it is uncommon for a coin to be graded 3 points too high. But 3 points in the current market can translate into thousands of dollars for even the most common Mormon gold coin. For this reason I be-

lieve that it is imperative that the buyer beware and is able to grade Mormon gold appropriately regardless of what the slab states in order to avoid a financial loss. Remember, as it has been said many times; buy the coin and not the slab. This statement is especially true when purchasing any Mormon gold coins.

The majority of Mormon gold coins have survived in XF40 condition or above. Yes, there are worn examples well below XF40 and care should be taken when considering one of these coins. For the majority of people contemplating a purchase of a Mormon gold coin, anything below XF40 should be examined very closely both for eye appeal and financial consideration.

One final point of examination should not be neglected. Actually, this may be the most important factor involving Mormon gold. This is the originality of the coin. The vast majority of Mormon gold coins have been cleaned, wiped, dipped, or in some manner touched up. This in itself does not mean that all of these coins should be avoided. Quite the contrary, many of these coins are attractive and many of them have actually been slabbed. If one limits his or her selection to absolutely original high grade perfect coins, the search will be long indeed. Just be careful as to the degree a particular coin has been 'messed with.' Coin doctors abound, and when you are fixing a \$20,000.00-\$75,000.00+ coin there is a great deal of incentive for profit.

There are true mint state examples of all Mormon gold coins known except the \$10 coin. However I have not seen or know the whereabouts of the single MS62 graded

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\$20. All mint state examples are extremely rare, existing to the extent of a maximum of 2-3 examples each of the remaining types. The MS numbers in the NGC population report below are almost certainly inflated due to re-submissions.

1849 Information

To begin this section, the grading of the 1849 issues will be discussed. This issue was struck in low relief and the design is relatively plain. It should be noted that even on high grade examples; both the \$2 ½ and \$5 issues of 1849 may have digits in the date, weak or sometimes completely missing. The numeral 8 seems to be affected the most. On many examples it is very weak, especially on the \$5 coin. Additional striking characteristics will be individually defined fingers of the hands and the outline of the fingernail of the thumb on well struck high grade examples. The circle of the iris inside the eye will be clearly defined in a complete circle on well struck high-grade examples. As mentioned in the preceding table, the majority of the \$2 ½ coins were struck after the dies used to strike them had bulged. This resulted in loss of design and lettering to the left on the obverse and right on the reverse. It is common to see a 50% or higher loss in detail in the words "TO THE," the left portion of the Bishop's miter hat and associated left portion of the eye are weak. On the reverse the word "TWO" is often weak. These problems on the \$2 ½ coin should be separated from the actual grade which is a degree of actual wear. These are not associated with wear, thus a coin from the bulged dies missing detail could theoretically grade MS60 or above. Eye appeal and personal preference need to be taken into account here. The coins struck from perfect dies however is only about 20% and quite scarce by comparison.

1850 Information

The 1850 issue is unique to the \$5 coin. This was also created in relatively low relief but there was significant additional detail added to the design. The striking elements of this coin are basically poor-good-better-best. Some relatively high grade coins are poorly struck and have little detail while some coins show very good detail but these are definitely in the minority. The cuffs of the arms if fully struck should show a series of horizontal indentations. The fingers should be defined, and, as with the 1849, the fingernail on the thumb should show. There



Top: Mint state \$2 ½ coin shows no wear and was struck prior to the dies developing a bulge. It is an outstanding specimen.

Bottom: Example of the 1860 gold coin. Note that there are no mountains behind the lion. The translation of the Deseret alphabet on the obverse is "Holiness To The Lord."

are design characteristics on the upper portion of the halo which occasionally do not show on poorly struck coins. The concentric circles of the eyeball should be complete on well struck examples; this striking feature is very uncommon. Finally, the date and lettering all suffer striking difficulties. Full date and lettering are present only on fully struck examples, but may be weak or incomplete on many high-grade examples.

1860 Information

The 1860 \$5 coin was struck on planchets close to the .900 fine standard and from superior dies with respect to the earlier issues. The relief was higher, in addition to the design being vastly improved. Some existing coins exhibit a semi-prooflike surface; however there are only 2-3 known mint state examples. The primary aspect for grading the 1860 coin is basic wear. The initial points of wear are on the lion's front left leg and rear leg. Also the lion's cheek and breast are high points. On the reverse, the first points to wear are the upper portions of each wing. Very few 1860 coins exist below the XF grade level.

Details of the 1860 Mormon Gold \$5

The 1860 coin was minted from gold newly discovered in Colorado. There were an estimated 785 pieces coined with the 1860 date. Today, only 35-45 are known. Late in 1861 the Governor of the territory prohibited the issue of private gold coinage. The U.S. mint, which had been operating for several years in San Francisco, was supplying an adequate supply of coinage for California and the western United States. In June, 1862 the United States Congress passed a law prohibiting private coinage of gold. This ended a very colorful era in which dozens of beautiful coins had been privately minted from the first gold recovered in the foothills of Northern California.

According to Walter Breen, a noted author of many books on numismatics, the 1860 Mormon gold coin was struck beginning in late 1859, continued thru 1860, and was last struck in early 1861.

This coin is unique because it utilized the Deseret alphabet for the inscription "Holiness To The Lord". The Deseret alphabet is a phonetic alphabet designed by Brigham Young. One reason for the alphabet was the influx of foreign born Saints in the valley. Brigham Young felt it would promote unity among the Saints. He and several associates worked on the design and much of the alphabet was based upon Pitman Shorthand. Its use was limited to a very few number of books utilized by the Mormons,

and this coin. It never gained wide acceptance, and was soon discontinued. Notable books written in the Deseret alphabet were "The Book of Mormon" and a two volume primer intended to teach children this alphabet.

The key to the Deseret Alphabet can be found on the following pages. With a little bit of practice it is easy to decipher the inscription on the 1860 gold coin, or the title on the Deseret primer (picture follows).

The Deseret Alphabet was initially used in the 1850's, and saw limited use through the late 1860's. As noted, the date of the primer is 1868, which was near the end of the alphabet's use.

There were two different sets of dies prepared for 1860. The first obverse die had three mountains behind the lion, whereas the second was without mountains. The first die to be used was the one with the mountains. As you can see in the above photo, this die broke very soon after several test coins in brass were struck. Several test pieces struck in brass are known to exist, but none are known in gold. A new die pair was created after the first set failed. The obverse die was slightly modified and did not have the mountains. All known 1860 dated gold coins were struck from this second die pair. There are additional copper uniface coins known from both dies, but these copper strikings were made at a much later date.



A grouping of 1860 coinage dies. The top picture are the dies which were used in striking the regular issued coins. The dies in the lower picture are those which were used first to strike trial patterns and cracked prior to initial use of the regular coinage of the 1860 coins.

Courtesy of the Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

PIONEER SPOTLIGHT



AGOSTON HARASZTHY

By George H. Hull



One drives along the green fields and past several vineyards before turning into an historic Napa Valley winery, red wine and sharp cheeses add to the enjoyment of the warm spring day. At the Buena Vista Winery, you wander over to look at a brass plaque on a stone monument; you spot the name Haraszthy. The plaque points out his connection to the U.S. Mint in San Francisco. Looking beyond the Monument, you see the underground caverns of the old winery.

These caverns are probably copies of the vineyard tunnels that Haraszthy had dug into the hillsides in Wisconsin, before he left for California in 1849. In Wisconsin, "the tunnel, which had an arched entrance, rough stone walls, and a low vaulted ceiling, extended into the hillside for a distance of forty feet."¹ The tunnels, both in Wisconsin and California, were dug into limestone hillsides, had stone walls, vaulted ceilings, and were dug on property, later vineyards, owned by Agoston.

Agoston Haraszthy, of Magyar ancestry, had migrated to America from his birthplace, the city of Pest, Hungary. Born on the banks of the Danube on August 30, 1812, as an only child of Karoly Haraszthy and Anna Marie Fischer. "Sometime in the middle of 1839, he made the acquaintance of an English naval captain named Bennett and two Americans."² Being Fascinated by their stories of America, Agoston had the three, Bennett, Whitlock, and Hislip write letters of introduction for later use. By the end of 1839, he made plans to leave, and on March 27, 1840 he left his home, wife, and two little boys behind and left with his cousin, Karoly Fischer. After a brief visit with Bennett in London, they sailed for New York City

on the "Samson" on April 30, 1840. There they looked up Whitlock, and then traveled to Sauk Prairie, Wisconsin where they bought 640 acres at \$3.00 per acre; paying one-third cash and two-thirds in merchandise, which was mainly woolen goods. His ventures included a brickyard, a steamship, and a vineyard.

In early December, 1848, President Polk informed the nation about the fantastic riches discovered in California. By the spring of 1849, Agoston, traveling by wagon train, arrived in San Diego with the intention of planting a vineyard in Mission Valley. He obtained some vines from Mission San Luis Rey, from the Franciscans. He was soon elected sheriff. In September of 1851 he was elected to go to California; he left for San Francisco on January 1, 1852 aboard the steamer "Gold Hunter" to the first state Democratic convention in Benicia, the site of the first territorial gold coins: the Norris, Gregg, and Norris, Gregg, and Norris \$5.00 gold pieces. He soon purchased land two miles south of the city limits of San Francisco.

In California, he was known as Colonel Haraszthy, although historical research has not been able to verify the accuracy of the Hungarian title. In 1852, "he became friends with a little circle of men who had fled Hungary during the revolution of 1848-49 and ultimately determined to seek their fortunes in California. The unofficial leader of the Hungarian community was Samuel C. Wass."³ Soon after his arrival, Wass had secured work as an assayer with Adams & Co. on Montgomery Street in San Francisco. The gold dust, pouring in from the mines, had to be assayed, melted, and turned into ingots and coins. The demand was so brisk that by November 1851 Wass and Uznay opened their own assay office. Soon a third Hungarian, Agoston Molitor joined them; the com-

pany was called Wass, Molitor, and Co.

By the summer of 1853, Agoston Haraszthy, Molitor, Uznay, and Sutherland located land claims of 2240 acres on the peninsula south of San Francisco at a spot where the San Andreas and Raymundo valleys meet. The area was later called Crystal Springs; following his normal pattern, he planted grape vines on this land.

"Agoston's friendship with Wass, Molitor, and Uznay gave him an opportunity to participate in the very lucrative gold refining business in California. It is not clear what background, if any, he had in metallurgy before his arrival in San Francisco. However, nobody who had met Agoston ever had any doubt about his ability to learn quickly, and if he had never seen a melter's crucible or mixed refining acids before his arrival in San Francisco it would have

Old S.F. Mint



certainly have presented no obstacles to his taking a place in the assaying and refining rooms of Wass, Molitor, and Co.”⁴

On May 5, 1857 another Hungarian immigrant, Janos Xantus wrote a letter back home to his mother in Hungary describing the success of fellow Hungarians. “At present there are still compatriots here. Janos Szabo is secretary of the local United States Mint. He gets a good salary, and handles considerable capital in different enterprises. A famous globe-trotting compatriot, Agoston Haraszti (Haraszthy) is in a company with Count Vas [Wass] and Urnay [Uznay], they have a bank and an exchange office; moreover, they have a gold smelting and refining factory with steam power installation and they are millionaires, although their business has just started to flourish.”⁵ Agoston was soon made a partner.

On July 3, 1852 President Fillmore signed a bill creating the San Francisco Mint, first housed in a small building owned by the assaying company Curtis, and Perry. A New York doctor, Lewis A. Birdsall was appointed director; John Hewston, who had worked previously at the Philadelphia Mint, as melter, and refiner; and George Eckfeldt as the first coiner. President Pierce then named Agoston

to the post of assistant melter. “Fortunately Agoston “had at least some background as assayer and refiner in Wass, Molitor, and Uznay’s offices.”⁶

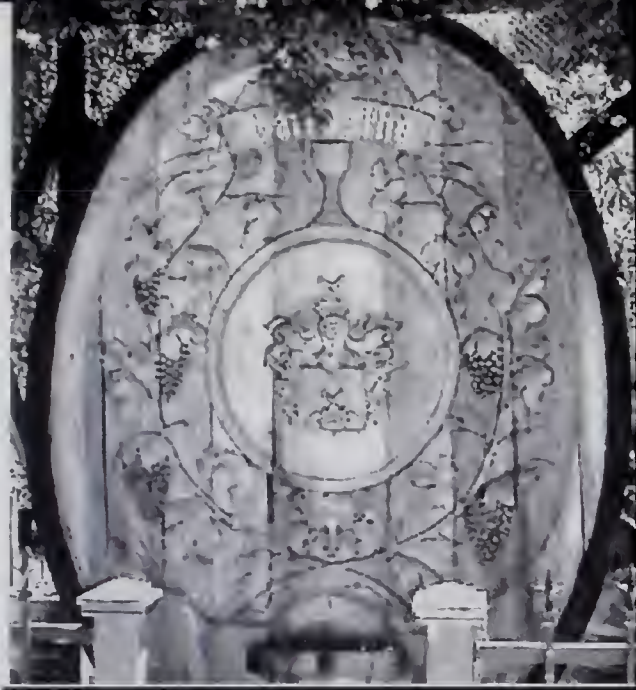
Because of the tremendous rush of business, Agoston “Spent long hours in the mint, arriving early in the morning and staying well past midnight.”⁷ To enable himself to work longer hours, Agoston moved to Harrison Street, between Second and Third, where his Hungarian neighbors were Wass and Molitor. “From its first day, the mint was a very busy place. The pavement in front of the building was piled with boxes containing bottles of acid for the refining process. Express couriers bounded up the steps with tightly wrapped packages of gold from the mines, and miners in plain clothes were constantly arriving with gold in carpetbags. The treasurer, the melter and refiner, and the coiner operated their individual departments with a large degree of independence. Each was charged, by law, with responsibility for the security of the precious metals when they were in each department.”⁸

The working spaces and vault spaces were extremely limited and always crowded. Also increasing Agoston’s frustrations were the slow Philadelphia Mint methods. To solve the problems, Agoston decided to establish a private refinery with three partners. Because of the perceived conflict of interest and because of “Black Friday” run on the banks, on February 22, the refinery closed its doors and Agoston remained at the mint. In May, 1855 Agoston replaced his 70 year old father as melter and refiner, he then increased the number of furnaces to seven from three. “Soon, more than \$1,500,000 worth of gold was being processed each month.”⁹

In 1854 a Treasury agent, J. Ross Browne, arrived to inspect all federal buildings in San Francisco. In addition to noting a shortage of acid, he became concerned with Agoston’s concurrent business activities with Wass, Molitor, and Uznay. “In the process of melting and refining gold, small particles of the precious metal were volatilized and deposited in the cracks and crevices of the furnaces, chimneys, and flues.”¹⁰ Jumping to conclusions, Brown concluded that Agoston was getting suspiciously wealthy. “But the precious metal was elusive. Gold was found on the roofs of buildings 300 feet away from the mint.”¹¹

In January Agoston resigned from the mint and joined Wass, Uznay, and Co. to build the Eureka Gold and Silver Refinery on the NW corner of Harris and Brannan streets. The elegant new brick building was opened for business by March, 1857; entering the front door one saw four large banker’s scales. Behind the vault was Wass’ office the walls were covered with gold framed pictures of great Hungarians.

Because of financial needs, Agoston sold his interest in the new refinery in May. Early in June a series of scandalous newspaper articles appeared. Brown had claimed that



Haraszthy wine barrel



*Oldest Stone Winery in California
Built by Count Agoston Haraszthy 1857*

*Buena Vista Vineyards,
Sonoma*

Oldest stone winery in California/ Built by Agoston Haraszthy 1857/ Buena Vista Vineyards, Sonoma CA

about 7000 ounces of gold, worth \$135,000 were missing; he met with Agoston in June and demanded that he submit to arrest and trial. The *Alta* wrote on June 5, "The sweepings from the roof of the Davidson Building amounted to 300 ounces. Eleven hundred and eighty ounces were collected from the chimney after two and a half months work."¹²

The *Alta* was sympathetic to Haraszthy, but the *Herald* wrote against him. Pranksters soon placed posters on the building staking claims in the "Famous Haraszthy Diggings;" the prospectors were J. Hungry and Sam Yankee. Another story soon broke accusing John Szabo, a former employee of Wass, Molitor and Co. of stealing gold under Agoston's supervision. Charges flew back and forth, but before the trial started, the government changed the charges from criminal to civil charges.

A grand jury investigation agreed that the mint building was unsuitable for processing gold; however on September 19, 1857 they charged Agoston with embezzlement of 9,092 ounces of gold bullion. A U.S. Marshall arrested him. During the trial, "Attorney Edward Stanley showed the jury a brick taken from the top of the chimney at the mint. It was covered with a glittering deposit of gold what was clearly visible to jurors."¹³ The case went to the jury and after five minutes of deliberations, the jury ruled Agoston innocent." Agoston did not owe the government a dollar or a dime or a penny. Count Wass and Captain Uznay were also exonerated."¹⁴

After the trial, Agoston turned his interests to agriculture. In 1861 he visited French vineyards and observed that the vineyards were usually small plots (a "clos" was a vineyard enclosed by a stone wall). He returned to beautiful Buena Vista with an assortment of cuttings.

In the spring of 1863 two of General Vallejo's daughters married Attila and Arpad, sons of Agoston. Restless and in financial troubles, Agoston and Giza, his first child,

left San Francisco in February, 1868 to look for opportunities in Nicaragua. With friends he acquired control of a sugar plantation, built a home-Hacienda San Antonio- and planned to build a sawmill. On July 6, he took a mule and rode to the sawmill site. He laid down to rest along a stream; he never returned home. An unsuccessful search party was organized. They found, "his mule tied to a nearby tree, and his pistols were still holstered in the saddle. But Agoston was nowhere to be seen."¹⁵ Never was a trace of Agoston found.

Had Nicaraguan rebels killed him? Had he gotten lost? Several days previously an alligator dragged a cow into the stream. A large tree had fallen across the stream; a broken branch was discovered near midstream. Did he fall and drown? Had Agoston's quest for riches and opportunity ended in the jaws of an alligator?

Agoston, who played such an exciting role in the gold rush era, met his death far from the bucolic, historic setting of his beautiful Buena Vista Winery, where this author experienced one of the best days of his life.

References:

1. Brian McGinty, *Strong Wine The Life and Legend of Agoston Haraszthy*, 1998, Stanford University Press, Page 120.
2. Ibid., Page 51.3. Ibid., Page 246.4. Ibid., Page 258.5. Letters from Janos Xantus, 1857, California Historical Society Quarterly.
3. Ibid., Page 246
4. Ibid., Page 258
5. Letters from Janos Xantus, 1857, California Historical Society Quarterly
6. Brian McGinty, *Strong Wine The Life and Legend of Agoston Haraszthy*, 1998, Stanford University Press, Page 262.
7. *Alta California*, May 13, 1858, Page 1.
8. Brian McGinty, *Strong Wine The Life and Legend of Agoston Haraszthy*, 1998, Stanford University Press, Page 262-3.
9. Letters from Agoston Haraszthy to James Guthrie, Secretary of the Treasury, September 17, 1855.
10. Brian McGinty, *Strong Wine The Life and Legend of Agoston Haraszthy*, 1998, Stanford University Press, Page 270.
11. Ibid., Page 271
12. *Alta California*, June 5, 1857, Page 1
13. Brian McGinty, *Strong Wine The Life and Legend of Agoston Haraszthy*, 1998, Stanford University Press.
14. *Alta California*, March 3, 1861, Pages 1 and 2.
15. Brian McGinty, *Strong Wine The Life and Legend of Agoston Haraszthy*, 1998, Stanford University Press, Page 462.



Auction Highlights

Undated Kellogg & Humbert Gold Ingot. 103.96 ounces. .896 Gold. Condition virtually as made, a prize from the S.S. Central America treasure.

This is a full gold ingot, not a faceplate or cut down portion, and is of a very impressive large weight and face amount! The possession of any ingot from the fabled treasure of the S.S. Central America is a badge of distinction combined with great personal enjoyment. Never before has such a treasure been found, and never again will another be.

Stack's The 74th Anniversary Sale, Lot #1756
Price Realized \$218,500

Stack's

Lot	Auction Date	Auction	Description	Service/Grade	Price Realized
1748	11/30/09	74th Anniv. Sale	1851 Humbert \$50 gold. K-5. Rarity-5-. 880 Thous. No 50.	NCS EF Details	\$10,350.00
1754	11/30/09	74th Anniv. Sale	1861 Clark, Gruber & Co. pattern \$20. K-12c. Rarity-7+	NGC EF 45 BN	\$8,050.00
1755	11/30/09	74th Anniv. Sale	1960 J.J. Conway \$5 Restrike Set Silver. MS 65 (NGC). A satiny smooth coin with just a whisper of toning on the surfaces, and carefully preserved since it was struck *	NGC MS65	\$345.00
1207	7/30/09	Tresures from SS New York	Nevada. Robinson Project, Lone Tree Mill, White Pine County. Silver King Mines. 18.3 mm x 28.2 mm x 3.2 mm.		\$2932.50
835	6/25/09	The Schaumburg Sale	1855 Kellogg & Co. \$20 gold. K-3b. Rarity-5.	NGC AU50	\$8337.50

Lot	Auction Date	Auction	Description	Service/ Grade	Price Realized
1372	7/31/09	#1128	1860 \$5 Mormon Five Dollar	PCGS AU55	\$63,250.00
2798	4/30/09	#1124	1849 \$5 Mormon Five Dollar	PCGS AU58	\$40,250.00

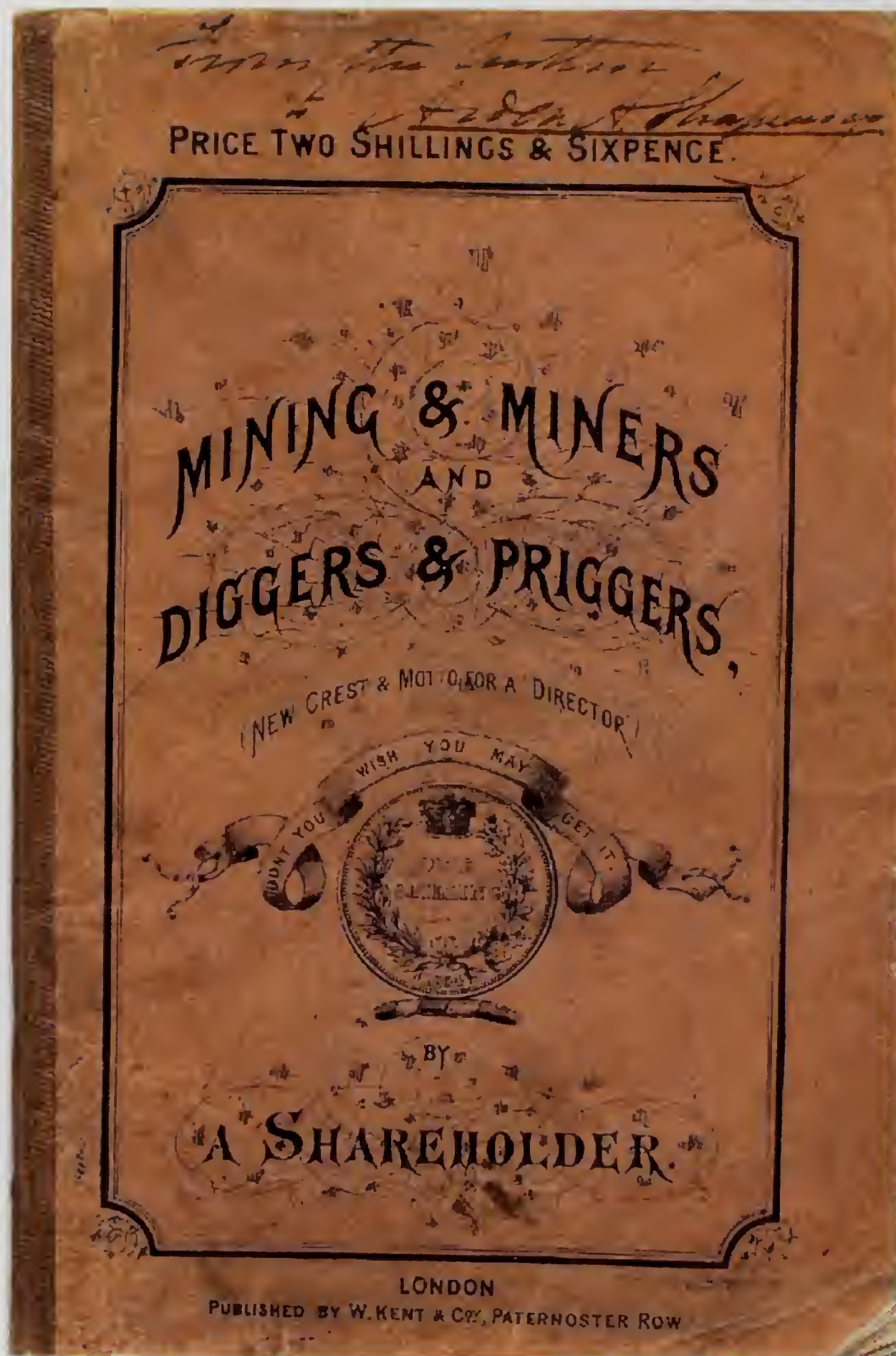
Bowers & Merena

The November 2009 Baltimore Auction U.S. Session Three

Lot #	Description	Prices Realized
3540	1852 U.S. Assay Office of Gold. \$50 Gold. K-13. Rarity-5. 887 THOUS. EF-40 Damaged, Rim Filed, Cleaned (Uncertified).	\$10,120.00
3542	1856 Octagonal 50 Cents. BG-307. Rarity-5+. Liberty Head. MS-62 (PCGS). OGH.	\$420.00
3544	1853 Octagonal \$1. BG-530. Rarity-2. Liberty Head. AU-50 (PCGS). OGH.	\$489.00
3545	1871 Octagonal 25 Cents. BG-717. Rarity-3. Die State II. Liberty Head. MS-65 (PCGS).	\$575.00
3549	1876 Octagonal 25 Cents. BG-780. Rarity-4. Liberty Head. MS-64 (PCGS). OGH.	\$690.00
3550	1872/1 Octagonal 25 Cents. BG-790. Rarity-3. Indian Head. MS-65 (PCGS).	\$776.00
3554	1872 Octagonal 50 Cents. BG-913. Rarity-4. Liberty Head. MS-66 (PCGS).	\$1,764.00
3555	1873/2 Octagonal 50 Cents. BG-941. Rarity-5+. Indian Head. AU-58 (PCGS).	\$196.00
3557	1864 Round 50 Cents. BG-1016. Rarity-4. Liberty Head. AU-58 (PCGS).	\$207.00
3558	1871 Round 50 Cents. BG-1030. Rarity-6. Liberty Head. MS-62 (PCGS). OGH.	\$575.00
3560	1870 Octagonal \$1. BG-1118. Rarity-5-. Liberty Head. AU-58 (PCGS).	\$805.00
3561	1875 Octagonal \$1. BG-1127. Rarity-4. Indian Head. AU-58 (NGC).	\$518.00
3562	1876/5 Octagonal \$1. BG-1129. Rarity-4. Indian Head. MS-63 DPL (NGC).	\$1,150.00

The September 2009 Philadelphia Rarities Sale Session Two

Lot #	Description	Prices Realized
1473	1849 Moffat & Co. \$5 Gold. K-4. Rarity-5. MS-62 (NGC).	\$11,213.00
1474	1850 Moffat & Co. \$5 Gold. K-7a. Rarity-4. Large Eagle. EF-45 (PCGS).	\$3,394.00
1485	1853 Octagonal \$1. BG-523. Rarity-5. Liberty Head. AU-58 (NGC).	\$644.00
1487	1876 Octagonal 25 Cents. BG-785. Rarity-5+. Indian Head. MS-63 (PCGS).	\$312.00
1488	1875 Octagonal 25 Cents. BG-798. Rarity-5-. Indian Head. MS-64 DPL (NGC).	\$575.00
1490	1871 Round 25 Cents. BG-810. Rarity-7-. Liberty Head. MS-65 (PCGS).	\$2,243.00
1492	1876 Round 25 Cents. BG-850. Rarity-6-. Indian Head. MS-64 PL (NGC).	\$587.00
1493	1871 Round 25 Cents. BG-859. Rarity-6-. Liberty Head. MS-63 (PCGS).	\$518.00
1494	1876 Round 25 Cents. BG-882. Rarity-7. Indian Head. MS-65 (PCGS).	\$1,438.00
1497	1875 Octagonal 50 Cents. BG-946. Rarity-4. Indian Head. MS-63 (PCGS). OGH.	\$334.00
1498	1881 Octagonal 50 Cents. BG-952B. Rarity-6-. Indian Head. MS-64 (PCGS). OGH.	\$633.00
1500	1869 Round 50 Cents. BG-1009. Rarity-5. Liberty Head. MS-65 (NGC).	\$443.00
1502	1872 Round 50 Cents. BG-1013. Rarity-6-. Liberty Head. MS-63 (NGC).	\$368.00
1505	1876 Round 50 Cents. BG-1063. Rarity-6-. Indian Head. MS-64 (PCGS).	\$530.00



last laugh

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